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**BATTALION/TASK FORCE COMMAND
AND CONTROL -- ARE WE USING
THE "BIG FOUR" MOST EFFECTIVELY?**

**A Monograph
by
Major Michael L. Parker
Armor**

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**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
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The study relies heavily on contemporary command and control experiences. Observations from the NTC and the relative success or failure of units, form the basis for my analysis. Contemporary ideas and observations are available in the volumes of military periodicals. Additionally, these journals are a source of historical dialogue regarding changes in the relationships of the Battalion/Task Force's senior leadership. Much of the direction for the preliminary portions of the study are derived from previous SAMS Monographs and CGSOC Theses. Authors such as John Boyd, Richard Simpkin, and Martin Van Creveld, are noted experts on the subject of command and control on the modern battlefield. Their expertise provides a theoretical frame of reference for the investigation of the command and control relationships.

The monograph concludes that the current doctrine is not being practiced and that there are some factors that muddy the waters. The solution to the question is to be found in a return to the basics of staff organizations — basics that both hold individuals responsible for certain duties and that are flexible enough to be effective in a variety of situations.

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—Are We Using the "Big Four" Most Effectively?**

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**Major Michael L. Parker
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ABSTRACT

BATTALION/TASK FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL — ARE WE USING THE "BIG FOUR" MOST EFFECTIVELY? by Major Michael L. Parker, USA, 61 pages.

How do the commander, executive officer, operations officer, and command sergeant major interact most effectively during continuous battlefield operations — is there a better way?

Command and control of the battalion/task force is a frequently debated topic. Current command and control doctrine relies heavily on the technological and traditional answers. There is a lack of focus on the human dimension in the continuous operations environment. Even the command and control doctrine that we use in peacetime is radically different from that of the doctrinal battlefield. Many studies and articles have sprouted from the battlefield command and control discussion, but the interrelationship of these four key players in continuous operations has been totally neglected.

The study relies heavily on contemporary command and control experiences. Observations from the NTC and the relative success or failure of units, form the basis for my analysis. Contemporary ideas and observations are available in the volumes of military periodicals. Additionally, these journals are a source of historical dialogue regarding changes in the relationships of the Battalion/Task Force's senior leadership. Much of the direction for the preliminary portions of the study are derived from previous SAMS Monographs and CGSOC Theses. Authors such as John Boyd, Richard Simpkin, and Martin Van Creveld are noted experts on the subject of command and control on the modern battlefield. Their expertise provides a theoretical frame of reference for the investigation of the command and control relationships.

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SECTION I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Command and control doctrine at the battalion/task force level has always been a topic of discussion and healthy debate among army leaders. Although technological aspects have been examined in great detail, there has been a lack of focus on the human dimension. Most specifically, examination of the organizational/interpersonal interaction of key armored/mechanized battalion/task force leaders and staff during continuous combat operations has been overlooked.

This monograph is designed to examine the interaction of these key battalion figures: the commander, executive officer, operations officer, and command sergeant major.

Many studies and articles have been written about battlefield command and control. Some address the commander's presence on the battlefield either as an individual or together with his command group. Others debate the responsibilities of the executive officer and the training of battle staffs. The operations officer and command sergeant major have generally been dealt with in much less detail, despite their relative importance in the structure of the battalion/task force leadership.

The interrelationship of these four key players in continuous combat operations has been totally neglected. This is most disturbing, because the synergistic effects of this relationship add to the potential of both the staff and to the combat effectiveness of the battalion/task force as a whole.

At the National Training Center, unit Rotation 86-7 was conducted as a special "focused rotation" which keyed on certain critical aspects of the battalion/task force command and control process. Among the thirty areas examined, only one dealt with the role of the command sergeant major in combat and two with the battalion/task force executive officer. The role of the operations officer was not specifically addressed.

I am not satisfied that we are using this group in the most efficient manner. There is an element of combat potential that must be focused on a critical point at a specific time to achieve decisive results. Their actions must be coordinated and focused; synchronized in time and space. The function of doctrine is to achieve the greatest combat effect with the means available. With resources and manpower at a premium and the scope and pace of warfare expanding as it has, there is little room for independent operators who have nary a clue as to what their responsibilities are.

Doctrine forms the baseline from which to adjust and refine the responsibilities of these individuals. This baseline is found in FM 71-2, *The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Task Force*, and FM 101-5, *Staff Organizations and Operations*. Commanders can deviate from doctrine based on the dynamics of the situation. The factors of METT-T combined with an individual's personal competence will ultimately determine his role in the organization. Initiative is best served by shifting from a norm based on these factors. This study seeks to define norms for the battalion/task force's senior leader relationships. If the

purpose of doctrine is to keep us from being too far wrong when we go to war, then I think that it's time for a mid course correction.

Even though the intensity and pace of operations and the scope of the battlefield have changed significantly over the past half-century, current command and control doctrine still relies heavily on the traditional answers. With the exception of a change promulgated by the "How to Fight" series of manuals, the doctrinal role of the operations officer and the executive officer have remained virtually unchanged over the last fifty years. A detailed description of the role of the Command Sergeant Major in combat has yet to be written, agreed upon, and accepted.

During the same period of time, the organization of a battalion/task force has changed and its size and complexity have increased. A battalion/task force commander now fights his force in an high intensity, high tech, high tempo, three-dimensional battlefield. We have been quick to provide technical solutions and recommendations, but there has been a lack of focus on the human dimension of command and control in the continuous operations environment.

To accomplish his mission in combat, the commander must synchronize certain elements of combat power. He does this by working through his staff and subordinate commanders. A widely accepted manner of analyzing this process uses the seven battlefield operating systems. These form a frame of reference for analysis as their effects must be concentrated and coordinated at critical points on the battlefield. The seven

battlefield operating systems are:

- * Maneuver
- * Fire support
- * Mobility/countermobility/survivability
- * Intelligence
- * Air Defense
- * Command and control
- * Combat service support

To make matters more difficult and confusing, even the command and control procedures that we use in peacetime for garrison activities are radically different from those of the doctrinal battlefield. Although garrison operating systems have not been officially recognized, there are certain tenets that guide units toward mission accomplishment in garrison. These are what I will call the four garrison operating systems:

- * Leading
- * Caring
- * Training
- * Maintaining

If I were to address only the mission, its specified and implied tasks, and the frame of reference, I would be remiss in my analysis. Is the system broken? Just what kind of problems are units having? In the article "Command and Confusion at the NTC. . . Why defeat?", eight major deficiencies were noted:

- * Loss of time
- * Poor METT-T analysis

- * Poor TOC location
- * Misunderstanding of the commander's intent
- * Poor use of scouts
- * Absence of flank coordination
- * Poor position of the task force commander
- * Poor reporting.

Each of these shortcomings is directly linked to the demonstrated performance and doctrinal responsibilities of the commander, the executive officer, the operations officer, and the command sergeant major.'

Purpose and Scope of the Study

How do the commander, executive officer, operations officer, and command sergeant major interact most effectively during continuous battlefield operations -- how is it supposed to work, how does it really work, and is there a better way?

The interrelationship of the battalion/task force's four key players in continuous operations has been totally neglected even though it is an ingredient that plays an important part in the overall success of a battalion/task force. This study relies heavily on contemporary command and control experiences in simulated continuous combat operations. After action reports and observations from unit rotations at the National Training Center, REFORGER exercises, and garrison operations were examined. I will also focus on the past and current battalion/task force command and control debate as recorded in military periodicals. These journals are a rich source of dialogue regarding changes in the relationships of the battalion/task force's senior

leadership.

Looking at the period from just before World War II to the present gives us a picture of a system that has not kept pace -- a system remaining solidly in place while the battlefield environment, weapons and communications technology go through radical changes. I will examine the doctrine and the debates that grew out of this time of change and the reactions to actual and proposed changes.

Vast quantities of information available from the National Training Center have provided an ample source of near-real battlefield observations of these leaders in action under varying conditions. As much as possible, I have tried to review primary documents and raw observations so that I could perform my own analysis. Reexamination of National Training Center experiences with respect to the relationship of these four senior soldiers may lead to different answers to critical command and control issues.

Much of the direction for the preliminary portions of the study are derived from previous SAMS Monographs and CGSOC Theses. My goal is to approach the human dimension in much the same manner as Major John F. Kalb did for the technological aspects in his monograph entitled "Measuring Command and Control-- Considerations for Force Design."

Outline of the Study

The study considers its subject in six sections. Section II explores the theories of command and control with respect to the cybernetic domain of battle. Authors such as John Boyd, Richard

Simpkin, and Martin Van Creveld, noted experts on the subject of command and control on the modern battlefield, provide a theoretical frame of reference. Relationship of peacetime and battlefield duties are examined from both a leadership/management and training point of view. Patterns of behavior and line-staff models help to explain the contemporary staff models and approaches.

Section III explores the evolution of battalion/task force command and control doctrine with respect to the "big four", from pre-World War II to the first years of the National Training Center. Changes in force structure and the impact of advances in procedures and technology are the forces that drive this evolution.

Section IV reviews the current command and control doctrine as it applies to the battalion/task force senior leadership under both peacetime and wartime conditions. This is what should happen according to the doctrine. This section includes a synopsis of their individual responsibilities, the basis for these responsibilities, and the group or corporate responsibilities. Additionally, the importance of their relationships with subordinate, superior and peer group counterparts is examined. The wartime responsibilities are then dealt with in light of the current thoughts on continuous operations.

Section V deals with current command and control in practice. This section tells it like it is. Observations, lessons, and conclusions from garrison, the National Training

Center, and other tactical exercises are examined. Training of the "big four" is reviewed as-well-as winning and losing combinations from the National Training Center.

The final section offers some conclusions and recommendations based on the material presented in the previous chapters. It addresses the need for standardization and defines a methodology to be used in getting the most out of the battalion/task force leadership team -- the "big four".

SECTION II

THEORIES OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

Introduction

Martin van Creveld in his book, *Command in War*, says that "command may be defined as a function that has to be exercised, more or less continuously, if the army is to exist and operate."

But what is this function? How can we get a grasp on what it really means? Theory gives us a frame of reference within which to conduct an analysis.

Clausewitz defined military theory as "a structure of knowledge consisting of a set of first principles that describes and explains processes and phenomena that lead to the destruction, disorganization, and disintegration of armies in battle." He established that there were three functions of theory.

Utilitarian - "improving the soldier's effectiveness" by defining and responding to the practical issues of the battlefield."

Pedagogic - "refining the judgement and 'instinctive tact' of

the individual" a creative process rather than rules to be learned by rote.⁴

Cognitive - "appropriate guides for conduct. . . [developed] through a comprehensive and scientific analysis." It was "concerned with with gaining a deeper understanding" which therefore would improve performance.⁵

Theory also serves as a building block that creates a broader understanding, strengthens critical judgement, and expands experience. Theory's relation to reality is best explained as follows:

- * Theory
 - * Operational concepts
 - * Doctrine
 - * Methods
 - * Techniques

So, to understand the doctrine and techniques, we must first understand theory.

FM 101-5 states that "The unique character of command and control of military operations is that it must be effective under the extraordinary stress of battle--in obscure situations, in compressed time, and under psychological and emotional stress caused by personnel and materiel losses. Also unique to military operations is the need for the command and control system to work quickly. It must be designed with such efficiency and dispatch that the decision-making process works better and faster than that of the enemy."⁶

The Staff

The core of a military staff must be organized as a single, cohesive team designed to quickly and easily assist the commander

in accomplishing the mission.'

"The efficiency of the command and control system is measured by the the extent to which the commander's intentions are carried out and the ability to cope quickly and effectively with changes in the situation."

Major (P) Henry L. Thompson coined the phrase *high performing staff*. These staffs are "highly cohesive, disciplined, creative battle leadership teams made up of commanders, and their staffs, and subordinate commanders. . . ." The term "high" is both relative and dynamic; but generally, the characteristics of a *high performing staff* are:

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| * Goal clarity | * Innovation |
| * Teamwork | * Rehearsal |
| * Focused energy | * Rhythm |
| * Knowledge and procedures | * Core values |
| * Creative standardization | * Reputation |
| * Meta language (jargon) | * Adaptability |

The commander establishes an effective staff system by instituting the proper organization that will best serve the mission of the unit and then giving that organization the appropriate guidance and latitude from which to exercise staff functions.

To best evaluate and understand the command and control doctrine most suited for a unit, it is important to know what the organization is expected to do in combat. This goes a bit farther than just a mission statement and is more a purpose and concept statement.

FM 71-2 explains the role of the battalion/task force in its introduction as follows: Tank and mechanized infantry battalion task forces combine the efforts of their company teams and combat support to perform tactical missions as part of a brigade or division operation.

Teamwork and Informal Communications

The success of the battalion/task force's four senior soldiers lies in their ability to function as a team. Formal and informal information sharing must take place continually. Networks of informal communications have been the real strength of many staff organizations in the past."

The commander plays an important role in both setting the climate for this informal network and operating within it. "The informal and sometimes tacit communication that goes on within an organization; its vital, but ultimately undefinable, ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information fed to it; the mental processes that, often unknown even to himself, do take place inside a commander's head; the tone of voice with which a report is delivered, or an order issued; the look on a man's face, the glimmer in his eye, when handed this or that message. . . ."

Colonel John Boyd says that: "We need a command control system whose secret lies in what's unstated or not communicated to one another in order to diminish friction, compress time, and exploit initiative at all levels, thereby gaining both quickness and security."

The lack of accurate and comprehensive information will

degrade the commander's ability to anticipate enemy actions and exploit successes at lower levels throughout the battlefield.

Martin van Creveld's concept of the "directed telescope" is useful here. This is a means of actively seeking information from the top by means of an independent collector. This system keeps the headquarters from becoming "a prisoner of its own reporting system." The key to the directed telescope, is having an observer look for critical elements of information at the time it is needed. From this, the commander can monitor operations and sometimes get a more comprehensive picture of the situation. The S3 and command sergeant major are ideal candidates for this role in the battalion/task force.

The relationship of the "big four" can be looked at as a management cell operating in a participative system. Each of the members contributes to the group in a consultative manner, with high interaction and a high level of teamwork. Characteristics of consultative organizations are high:¹⁸

- * Motivation
- * Communication
- * Interaction
- * Decision making
- * Goal setting
- * Control
- * Performance

The Cybernetic Domain of Battle

The functions of organization, command, control, and information/communications (C³I) fall within the cybernetic

domain of battle. Of these, command and control are both the most important and the most difficult to deal with. FM 101-5 states that "Command and control is the process through which the activities of military forces are directed, coordinated, and controlled to accomplish the mission. This process encompasses the personnel, equipment, communications, facilities, and procedures necessary to gather and analyze information, to plan for what is to be done, to issue instructions, and to supervise the execution of operations."¹⁴

The steps involved in the cybernetic process are accomplished sequentially to achieve the desired action. The following activities comprise the cybernetic loop:¹⁵

- * Surveillance
- * Communications
- * Data processing and management
- * Decision making
- * Communications
- * Action

One or more cybernetic loops are necessary to achieve the desired action. The theory recognizes that subordinate organizations execute their own cybernetic loops, which is consistent with the hierarchical command structure whose basic purpose is to accomplish a military action.¹⁶

Command and Control

Martin van Creveld refines the concept of command and examines its component leadership and management functions. His

premise is that leadership provides motivation, whereas management provides purpose and direction. The management functions of command equate to intent and concept. The command sergeant major is primarily concerned with the functions of leadership, the executive officer and S3 with the functions of management, and the commander with the functions of both.

Martin van Creveld in his book *Command in War* believes that the ideal command and control process:"

- * Gathers information
- * Provides information upon which to base estimates
- * Presents alternative courses of action
- * Produces decisions that are adhered to in principle
- * Drafts orders
- * Transmits orders and verifies their understanding
- * Monitors developments

TRADOC Pamphlet 525-2, *Tactical Command and Control*, provides another doctrinal view on the command and control process by defining the following tasks:

- * Find out what is going on.
- * Decide what to do about it.
- * Issue the necessary instructions.
- * Keep track of how well the instructions are being carried out.

Command and control staff functions as shown in theory and doctrine center on five common functions: collect information, make an estimate of the situation, make a recommendation, prepare plans and orders, and supervise the execution of

decisions."¹⁰

A Model Explaining the Theoretical Framework

The command and control system is evolving continuously, but some factors remain constant throughout time. The battalion/task force commander works with and through his staff and subordinate commanders. Through this command relationship, he interacts with the battlefield through the seven battlefield operating systems. This phrase may be new, but the concept has been around for quite a while. Through these operating systems, firepower, maneuver, intelligence, combat support, and combat service support are combined to fight enemy forces. The models that I will use are very similar to those proposed by the 1977 version of FM 71-2 and the 1977 Final Approved Draft of FM 101-5.

Figure 1 is my model of command and staff interaction on the battlefield. This is my attempt to link theoretical concepts to reality. Six of the seven operating systems form the objective framework. Figure 2 is the model for garrison activities. Depending on the environment, the sum of all of the processes is either the seventh battlefield system, command and control or the fourth garrison system, leading. These two models reflect the focus of operations in a specific setting. Leading, caring, training, and maintaining are not just garrison activities. They are relevant to the battlefield, but their relative position in the hierarchy of the command and control system is different.

At the hub of the circle is the commander, from whom all directions and motivation originate. Immediately adjacent to the commander is the chief of staff and the coordinating staff. Each of the coordinating staff members in turn, pass information to a

special staff officer who is closer to the business end of things. Variations on these models will be used throughout this monograph to illustrate the interaction of the staff.

SECTION III

EVOLUTION OF BATTALION/TASK FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL DOCTRINE

Introduction

The command and control system at the battalion level is organized on a basic system that applies to all levels of command up through joint and combined headquarters. This system, as outlined in the current FM 101-5, is relatively unchanged from the doctrine of 50 years ago.

Perhaps this is true because history has shown "that leadership, communications, and organization are essential elements for establishing and maintaining unit control. Man is the focus of the control process. As one study put it, 'the control of military units means simply--the control of men.' and man is the perpetual component in all military operations."

The Inter-war Years

The *Staff Officers' Field Manual* dated 1932, is the predecessor of our FM 101-5. It provides "Staff principles and functions applicable to the staffs of all units, together with pertinent reference data."

Any military staff organization is based on the duties of the commander whom it serves. The responsibilities of the

commander can be divided into four principal functional groups as follows: personnel, military intelligence, operations and training, and supply. "These four subdivisions, together with a coordinating head, exist in the staffs of all units from the battalion to the general headquarters of the field forces."²¹

The coordinating head of the staff is the executive. Of the key responsibilities of the executive, the specific duty is that "He transmits the will of the commander to those who execute it and is the principle coordinating agency which ensures the efficient functioning of the staff and of all troops in the command."²²

He plays a more active role as interface between the commander and staff and "keeps the commander informed of the enemy situation and the situation of the command as to location, strength, morale, training, equipment, supply, and general effectiveness."²³ The commander appears to be more isolated from the rest of his staff, with the executive filtering information in both directions.

The *Staff Officers' Field Manual* in its description of the operations and training section [S3] functions recognizes that "From the nature of its duties, it must maintain the closest cooperation and collaboration with the other staff sections. It confers directly with the commanders of all combat arms and technical units within the command, with the commanders of supporting units, and with the commanders of other units with which the command may be associated. One of the most important duties is to arrange the details for coordination of effort and employment in combat of the combined arms."²⁴ Although the

operations officer must go through the executive to coordinate with the commander, he has much more freedom in coordinating with the staff and external organizations.

Figure 3 graphically portrays the staff relationships in the army staff organization of 1932. The relationship of the staff members to each other is simple and balanced. The commander and executive are at the center of this relationship and form the bond that makes the staff a cohesive whole. The commander is not likely to deal directly with the staff. The operations officer has great latitude in coordinating matters with both interunit and intraunit commanders and staff.

World War II

FM 17-33's description of a tank battalion in 1944 is not much different than the same organization of today: "It consists of a headquarters and headquarters company, three medium tank companies, a light tank company, a service company, and a medical detachment."²⁰

The mission of the tank battalion is offensive in nature, which is the basis of its organization for combat. The organization's control is best suited by thorough planning and a decentralized command and control structure. These needs are reflected in the command and staff duties and responsibilities.

Specific duties of the commander, executive, and S-3 as per the 1944 manual are as follows:

"The battalion commander is responsible for every phase of the training of every component part of the battalion; for its actions in battle; for the health and well-being of every individual in the battalion; for the supply and maintenance of all of the equipment of the battalion; and the repair of all items of equipment which become unserviceable for any reason

whatsoever."²⁶

"The executive is the assistant to the battalion commander. He is prepared at all times to assume the battalion commander's functions. A high degree of intimacy must exist between the battalion commander and his executive. They must understand each other and each other's methods. The executive supervises all staff operations."²⁷

"The S-3 supervises, under the direction of the battalion commander, the execution of the training program of the battalion and the operation of the battalion in battle. One of his principal duties in battle is coordination with attached and supported units."²⁸

FM 17-33, December 1944, in a manner much similar to that of the "How to Fight" series of the 1970's, provides an excellent guide for troop leading in a tank battalion. It provides a detailed discussion of actions required by both the commander and staff in relation to the development of a tactical situation.

Figure 4 graphically portrays the staff relationships in the tank battalion of 1944. They are not much different from those of the staff in 1932. The commander and executive officer are still at the center of the organization. What this does show us is the special staff members of the tank battalion who further assist the coordinating staff accomplish their mission. Notice that the commanders of Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Service Company fill roles as both special staff and commanders in combat.

Post World War II, Korea, and ROAD

The doctrine on battalion staff functions and relationships changed little from World War II to Korea and ROAD. The one significant addition during this period was the description of the functions and duties of the Sergeant Major.

Perception played a large role in determining the role of

the sergeant major. The way that senior sergeants first perceived the role of the command sergeant major is best revealed by the following reminiscences of a sergeant major:

"When I came into the Army in 1945. . . there was no such mention of anyone called a Sergeant Major. Most of the NCOs I met were either pre-World War II or from World War II. In fact it was early 1950's before I heard of a Sergeant Major. The sergeant that held that position in those days was usually an old soldier assigned to help the adjutant run the S-1 shop."²⁹

Another old soldier adds, "I watched the whole thing from the beginning. In fact, I was on the first CSM list and the position was fielded with no instructions. They put this position in units and never trained the battalion commanders or the CSMs on their relationship. . . Everyone assumed that the CSMs knew what to do."³⁰

From the confusion of these perceptions was born the duty description of the senior noncommissioned officer in the battalion. "He acts as the commander's representative in dealing with other noncommissioned officers, and is his noncommissioned officer adviser in enlisted personnel matters. He establishes direct contact with the first sergeants, personnel staff noncommissioned officer of organic units, and first sergeants of attached units. He holds periodic meetings with them to disseminate information and instructions from the battalion commander."³¹

Vietnam, Post-Vietnam, and the "How to Fight" Era

The command and control doctrine set down in the 1977 version of FM 71-2 represents a radical shift in duties and responsibilities of the executive officer, S3, and command sergeant major. Duties of each are not as well spelled-out as in previous years. For example, the only specific reference to the duties of the executive officer are in Chapter 8 "Combat Service

Support" where he is charged to "coordinate and supervise the task force combat service support."²²

Staff relationships are defined with regards to their interface with the battlefield operating systems. Figure 5 shows this relationship. Notice how the executive officer has moved to the periphery and is primarily responsible for the interface with the combat service support system. He appears to have taken on a primary staff role, relegating the motor officer, S1, and S4 to the roles of special staff officers. Appendix M of FM 71-2, "Functions of the Staff", does not mention the executive officer by either name or function. Although it's recognized that "to be successful, the staff must work together," there is no mechanism or individual who is responsible for this bonding.²³

The S3 has the lion's share of the responsibility for focusing combat operations, interfacing directly with 5 of the 6 operating systems. Appendix M of FM 71-2 reinforces this observation as the S3 has the majority of horizontal integration tasks.

As suggested in an article published in an early 1982 issue of *Infantry*, there was actually a "Bilateral Staff." The executive officer fulfilled the role of deputy commander for administration and logistics (admin/log), and the S3 was the deputy commander for operations and intelligence (ops/intel). Figure 6 describes a battalion bilateral staff concept.²⁴

The command sergeant major's role is still that of the commander's senior advisor on enlisted matters. There is a warning about allowing him to be used as an administrator. The

focus of his duties seem to revolve around capturing the spirit of the unit by keeping "his finger on the pulse of the command."²⁶ This is where we find the command sergeant major's duty approaching that of a *directed telescope*. "He is often the one who first discovers that the commander's decisions and policies are not being carried out in the manner the commander intended"²⁶--the classic directed telescope.

The NTC Era

The establishment of the National Training Center in 1980 has provided an environment for realistic combined arms training of battalion/task forces. The purpose of the tactical engagement simulation exercises are to provide feedback to improve the doctrine, tactics, and training of armored and mechanized task forces. In BG Leland's "Memorandum for LTG Riscassi", reflecting on his 18 months as the commander of the NTC, he states that "there is clearly a dominant emphasis on the requirement for in-depth planning and attention to tactical details. While battles are invariably decentralized and very little ever happens exactly as planned, a unit's ability to respond effectively to the unexpected and to use individual initiative to exploit opportunities is largely determined by how much hard work is done up front. Flexibility is a function of preparation (my emphasis). The weak link in the chain was the staff and their ability to provide information, make estimates, make recommendations, prepare plans and orders, and supervise the execution of tactical operations."²⁷

Five major issues were at the root of all discussions

advocating change:

How do we get the TOC to function efficiently, "organized and trained to use information in order to operate while existing in a hostile environment"?"

Staffs are not proficient at coordinating and articulating operations orders. The staff rarely wargames the courses of action together." The S2 and S3 are not working together. "When a mission comes down, the S3 starts planning the operation without knowing the enemy situation. The S2 does not give the S3 a continuous update."

There is a tendency to ignore logistics execution and planning during the conduct of the battle. Furthermore, logistics are not given due importance during the staff estimate process.

The succession of command must be decided before the battle begins and everyone must thoroughly understand the process. "Who will take command, how will he take command and under what circumstances will he do it?"

The mechanism to control engineer activities at the battalion/task force is broken. Nobody supervises either the operational or logistical aspects of the effort. With resources scarce and time short, there needs to be someone who is both in charge of the engineers and coordinates the entire scope of his activities within the Battalion/Task Force.

Looking within the staff and at the staff process it became evident that there was nobody in charge other than the commander. The whole reason for a staff is because the complexity of the organization and multiplicity of details is so great that they cannot be handled by one man. The commander's attention had to be simultaneously focused on his combat elements as-well-as his operations/intelligence staff and his administrative/logistics staff. The missing link was the chief of staff.

In an attempt in 1984 to fix what was broken and redefine the role of the executive officer the commandants of the Armor and Infantry schools, in a coordinated effort, sent a message to

GEN Carl E. Vuono, the TRADOC commanding general, that gave their interpretations of the duties of the executive officer:

"Keep abreast of his own, higher, lower, and adjacent unit operations... anticipate future requirements and oversee the planning process... eavesdrop on his own and higher command nets... report to and relay orders and messages from higher headquarters... coordinate the execution and planning of CS and CSS operations... take over a combat vehicle and become directly involved in the battle as directed by the commander, and be prepared to take command...." "48

SECTION IV

CURRENT BATTALION/TASK FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL DOCTRINE

Introduction

Tank and mechanized infantry battalion task forces combine the efforts of their company teams and combat support. "The key to victory is to quickly mass the combat power of maneuver company teams and integrate and synchronize CS and CSS combat multipliers." "48

Individual Responsibilities and Relationships

Battalion Commander

The 1988 Final Approved Draft of FM 71-2 redefines the responsibilities of the key battalion command and staff elements. The role of the battalion commander has remained consistent with previous definitions: he is responsible for everything that the unit does, and accomplishes that by working through his organic/attached subordinate commanders and staff.

Executive Officer

The executive officer is reinstated as the primary assistant

to the battalion commander. He is the "chief of staff, the second in command, and the principle integrator of CSS in support of maneuver." During the battle he monitors the battle from the main command post, although he is free to move to where he is most needed. He maintains contact with higher headquarters, keeps abreast of the friendly situation, and synchronizes CS and CSS efforts with those of the overall plan and plans for future operations."

S3

The scope of S3 duties have not changed significantly, although with respect to the executive officer, he has returned to full status as a coordinating staff officer. He is still responsible for planning, task organizing and synchronizing the efforts of the battalion/task forces organic units, attached/OPCON units, and combat support units. He coordinates with the entire staff in preparing the task force order. During the battle, he operates forward to assist the commander, either with him at the main battle or from another location on the battlefield to supervise a supporting operation."

Command Sergeant Major

The command sergeant major is the commander's primary advisor concerning enlisted soldiers. He must know the administrative, logistical, and operational functions of the battalion. His attention is focused on the soldier and soldier support matters. The command sergeant major may act as the commander's troubleshooter, or may perform critical liaison, coordinate passage of lines, lead advance or quartering parties,

supervise at key breach/ford sites, monitor key defensive preparations, or assist in the CSS effort."

The Group Process and Corporate Responsibility

Figure 7 models the current staff doctrine. The approach is more balanced than the last system. The executive officer, in his role as chief of staff, is properly employed to directly supervise and synchronize the efforts of the coordinating staff sections. It is interesting that there is little direct interaction of the coordinating staff. As I will show later, doctrine is not a true picture of reality.

The continuous operations variable is one that is difficult to deal with on the modern battlefield. There is currently no doctrine that addresses the process for maintaining the same level of readiness and competence around-the-clock on the battlefield.

Doctrine may be emerging. A look at what is being proposed can be found in a 1986 Armor-Infantry Center Concept Paper entitled, "K+ Organizational Concept." The basic premise of the paper is that:

"AirLand Battle doctrine requires that we be able to fight on a sustained basis. Since human beings have a requirement for sleep and rest, it is incumbent on us to develop a system which will meet these requirements. The K+ organizational design recognizes the need for conducting sustained operations. . . We need to have redundancy in the command element."

"In order to have continuous, alert, and responsive command, we need two command groups. The current concept of S1,2,3, and 4 is replaced by the formation of the battle management section. Sufficient redundancy is built into the section to rotate personnel."

Relationships with Subordinates

The duties of the commander at the battalion/task force level and those at the company/team level differ only with respect to the relative size and complexity of the organization being commanded. Likewise the duties of the executive officers in both organizations is the same, except that the company/team has no formal staff organization per se.

The duties of the command sergeant major and the first sergeant are similar with respect to advice on enlisted matters. However, the chief logistics coordinator in the company/team is the first sergeant. The scope of his duties are such that it is difficult for him to function as a directed telescope. He has less direct relations with the command sergeant major and more with the S1, S4, BMO, and their special staffs.

Summary

FC 71-6, *Battalion and Brigade Command and Control*, provides techniques and procedures for the exercise of command and control in combat. These methods are run parallel to those in FM 71-2. In so much as both FM 71-2 and FC 71-6 are prescriptive in nature, they still realize that command is a very personal matter and that the commander will ultimately employ his staff based on his experience, the mission, and the strengths and weaknesses of the individual staff members. It is the practical application of this staff doctrine that is fueling the current debate.

SECTION V

CURRENT BATTALION/TASK FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL IN PRACTICE

Introduction

The National Training Center has compiled volumes of observations and comments based on the reports of the observer controller staff. "One of the deficiencies with the existing system is that comments are often made in isolation of other tasks and do not reflect the interdependency of the tasks." This has been especially true of command and control issues. The following discussion is based on the review of three years worth of command and control observations and discussions, to include those of the focused rotation 86-7, which keyed on command and control issues.

Individual Responsibilities and Relationships - Tactical

Battalion Commander

National Training Center experience has proven that the need for the commander to see the battlefield is paramount. Battalion/task force commanders and S3s must be positioned where they can best observe the two most critical battlefield areas. The commander must also position himself where he can best influence the battle by virtue of the moral effect of his presence. Normally, battalion/task force commanders have spent between 80 and 93 percent of their time well forward in their command and control vehicle. The major exception to this has been during meeting engagements when the executive officer, rather than the commander, was well forward in sector. The most

critical factor for the battalion/task force commander is survivability. What's important is not just his protection, but his location and activities. The staff, most particularly the executive officer, must know his exact location and activities on the battlefield and with respect to the operation."

Executive Officer

Observations support the fact that the second in command (2IC) concept works well if used. The executive officer's efforts should be toward both information and functions integration throughout the staff. The executive officer changes his focus based on the phase of the operation. His position is also dependent on the phase of the operation. There is a feeling that the 2IC/executive officer doctrine is either not adequate or just not being followed. "Executive officers are too timid or too garrison-oriented to pick up the battle when the commander is killed or out of the net."

A solution to the problem of succession of command during the battle has been for the executive officer to remain the chief of staff and the S3 to take over for the commander. Location on the battlefield, pace of the operation, experience levels, familiarity with the current operation, and the availability of a command and control vehicle are all factors to be considered. After the battle, the executive officer can assume command of the battalion/task force. The S3 or some other officer becomes the executive officer."

The executive officer's position is unique in that he does not trade-off responsibilities with anybody. Rotations have

shown that the battalion/task force executive officer normally gets less than the prescribed minimum of four hours of sleep. The cumulative effects of sleep loss severely degrades the executive officer's effectiveness."

The executive officer is operating forward, normally out of the TOC, when the commander and S3 are forward controlling the battle. It is easy for him to become the "chief of the TOC" as opposed to the "chief of staff". His focus must continuously pan between the current battle and future operations within the framework of all of the operating systems."

There is a lot of confusion generated by the term "fighting XO" which has gotten quite a bit of coverage in many military journals. Unfortunately, this concept advocates the executive officer's role as a "switch hitter." Under the fighting XO concept, his focus during the battle is on fighting the battle from the TOC. After the battle, his focus turns toward sustainment.

Task priority and time management fall within the scope of the executive officer's duties. The complex nature of planning operations and the coordination required for both combat and support activities requires smooth and timely staff processes. The requirements are fed to the executive officer from the bottom-up; then he sets the pace and priorities from the top-down. The "Planning Time Discipline Guide" from FM 101-5 is a well developed tool for estimating planning times."

There will be times when the executive officer must focus his attention on a particular CSS aspect during the planning or execution phase of a mission. At those rare times, during the

planning phase, the relationship of the executive officer and S3 may be more along the lines of the bilateral staff model.

Unfortunately, National Training Center observations show that the executive officer is frequently away from the TOC coordinating and supervising the CSS effort during both planning and execution phases.

S3

I have already examined most of the S3's functions when discussing those of the commander and executive officer. Many doctrinal functions previously and presently assigned to the operations officer are not performed by him. A majority of CONUS based units have a Captain filling the S3 duty slot. He comes to the position critically short of experience. My observation has been that many captain S3s are kept on a very short leash. This is due either to their own inexperience or to a concerned boss who is trying to develop his staff without sacrificing mission accomplishment. This tends to force the executive officer or commander to take a more active role in planning and coordinating operations.

The S3 and commander usually survive continuous operations by the trade-off system. During the commander's "off" time, the S3 frequently receives briefbacks from the company/team commanders. During orders reproduction and other slack planning time, the S3 is normally off-shift. This procedure has been successful in allowing the commander and S3 to get four to five hours of sleep a day.

Command Sergeant Major

The command sergeant major duties in FM 71-2 should be updated. He should identify, correct, and bring to the commander's attention NCO leadership problems. He moves with the commander to assess morale, logistical readiness, and the unit's ability to perform anticipated combat missions."

Some battalion/task force commanders put their command sergeant major forward during combat operations to observe and report on critical areas on the battlefield. This concept of the "directed telescope" is one of observation and not of control. Although the S3 may also be forward at a critical place on the battlefield, his responsibility is more likely to be assisting in the control of the specific task or mission. The personal professional qualifications of the command sergeant major affect his ability to act as a "directed telescope." Many commanders find that not all command sergeant majors are good enough operators to be dependable observers. I think that a command sergeant major's qualifications as an operator are indispensable and that they should be a nonnegotiable prerequisite skill.

For the most part, command sergeant majors are troubleshooters and firefighters who move to the site of a crisis and try to sort it out. Most of these "fires" are in the area to the rear of the combat trains. In many ways, in this role, he is starting to assume many of the duties associated with the executive officer and crisis management.

Group Relationships - Tactical Environment

Figures 8 through 10 model three real-world variants of the

command and control doctrine as described in the 1988 version of FM 71-2. Each of these can be seen in practice throughout the army's battalion/task forces. The balanced orientation, administrative/logistics orientation for planning, and the operations/intelligence orientation for execution models best represent the most viable winning combinations as proven by the National Training Center.

Balanced Orientation

The balanced orientation (figure 8) portrays the best doctrinal relationship and the practical application that everyone really strives for. The executive officer and commander are at the hub of all activity. The coordinating staff work with and through the executive officer to accomplish their missions. There are special coordinated relationships between the S2/S3 and the S1/S4/BMO. This model is balanced, maintaining stability of the organization and of the internal relationships.

Administrative/Logistics Orientation

This relationship (figure 9) is what most expect to see in the planning phase of an operation. Unfortunately, it's also seen during the execution of tactical missions because of inadequate preparation. The same staff relationships exist between the coordinating staff as in the balanced orientation. The executive officer's focus has shifted to the CSS operating system. His attention is devoted to the S1/S4/BMO responsibilities. He plays no significant role in the tactical planning other than to offer advice on logistical matters. The commander's focus has shifted toward the tactical operating

systems. He, together with the S2 and S3, writes the tactical plan.

Operations/Intelligence Orientation

This relationship (figure 10) is what most expect to see in the tactical execution phase of an operation. This technique is what is seen most of the time at the National Training Center, in conjunction with the Administrative/Logistics Orientation. Unfortunately, unless the executive officer can maintain the proper balance, he gets so involved in both the planning and execution that he never gets a chance to rest.

The same staff relationships exist between the coordinating staffs as in the previous two examples. The executive officer's focus has shifted to the tactical operating systems, as has the commander's. There is no real higher-level staff supervision in the CSS arena. This imbalance may be the cause of poor battle sustainment which causes the executive to have to catch-up during planning phases. One of the main reasons that the executive officer's focus has changed is because he is in the TOC. It is all too easy for him to become completely engrossed with the battle: all its action, excitement, and uncertainty.

Individual Relationships - Garrison Environment

Generally speaking, the garrison focus of most battalions follows a modified administration/logistics orientation except during times of critical/isolated training activities or inspections.

The roles of the commander and the command sergeant major

are virtually unchanged from the tactical environment. The command sergeant major is more actively and directly involved in the day-to-day activities of the battalion. This is accomplished through the NCO support channel, which acts like a parallel chain of command in the unit. This is not to say that he does not do the same in combat, but rather to point out that he is more directly involved with the company first sergeants. Together, they monitor the caring aspect of the battalion and monitor individual training for their respective commanders.

The company/team first sergeant is not the chief logistician as in combat, the executive officer is. Likewise, the battalion executive officer is normally the chief coordinator of administrative and logistical matters in garrison. The battalion executive officer is most concerned with maintaining although there is some overlap into the caring and training areas.

In a few cases where an isolated training activity or inspection is the most important item on the battalion's agenda, the executive officer may assume a training orientation. This is normally the exception rather than the rule.

The S3, together with the commander, is the chief training planner. During the execution of training, the S3 functions as a "directed telescope"--determining how effective training is and formulating recommendations for additional or varied training activities.

What is most important about the effect of garrison responsibilities on combat tasks and relationships for the "big four" is that:

The executive officer gets so comfortable with his

administrative/logistics orientation that he keeps functioning that way in a tactical environment. Additionally, the extra supervision provided the S1, S4, and BMO in garrison retards their ability to be fully functional in combat.

The command sergeant major gets into a "command mode" with the first sergeants; something that's nonexistent in combat. There is some feeling that the command sergeant major should be the chief administrative/logistics coordinator in combat, capitalizing on the working relationships established with the first sergeants in garrison.

There is a perception that the executive officer, Command Sergeant Major, and the S3 are pulling in different directions in garrison. This is partially true and when properly managed by the commander can create the ideal balance in the battalion.

Group Relationships - Garrison Environment

There are three models that can be used to define the command and control process in garrison. There is the garrison administration/logistics orientation, the garrison training orientation, and the trilateral staff. Figures 11 through 13 graphically portray these models. Of course, the balanced approach could apply to garrison as well as combat, but seldom does.

Garrison Administration/Logistics Orientation

The administrative/logistics orientation (figure 11) shows the most common relationship in garrison. The executive officer is the chief of staff and second in command, but is focused mainly on maintaining. The S3's main concern is training, with some interest in other two areas only inasmuch as they detract from training. The command sergeant major takes the lead in caring although he is getting more involved in the individual training of the battalion. There is a perception in this model that training has taken a back seat to administrative considerations.

Garrison Training Orientation

The training orientation (figure 12) is a trainer's dream and a logistician's nightmare. The entire focus of the battalion is on training. This is usually a short duration reaction to a major training failure, training activity, or inspection.

Trilateral Staff

In the trilateral staff model (figure 13), there is not a chief of staff per se. The staff is organized around what appears to be three deputy commanders. The executive officer fills the role of assistant commander for maintenance, the S3 as assistant commander for training, and the command sergeant major as the assistant commander for caring. Difficulties with this arrangement is the same as with the 1977 era staff, the commander alone is responsible for the bonding and guiding of the staff.

Summary

The methods for using the "big four" are extremely varied and situationally dependent. Although it is the commander who ultimately decides how to organize his assets, there are certain things that influence him. Probably the first thing that most commanders do in organizing their executive officer, S3, and command sergeant major is to have a meeting to discuss just the topics and ideas presented in this monograph. Based on the desires of the commander and the consensus of the group, responsibilities are assigned. The patterns usually follow one of those that I have explored here previously. The question that

the commander must answer is, "how can we consistently achieve the greatest effectiveness with the means available in any situation?"

SECTION VI

CONCLUSIONS

"An army has only two functions--
to fight or to prepare to fight."

Fehrenbach⁹⁰

The answer to the question posed at the end of the previous section is quite simple and is based on fundamental principles that have remained unchanged for some time. First of all, the commander must be in charge of the situation and must not let the situation command him.

Solutions based more on demonstrated deficiencies than with regard to the overall mission of the organization will yield organizations similar to the 1977 "How to Fight" solution or the currently popular Administrative/Logistics Orientation or Operation/Intelligence Orientation. Each of these has a destabilizing effect on the healthy balance of the operating systems.

The solution to the problem is found in the basics. The organization has to be designed to:

- * Make the commander's job easier.
- * Facilitate fast accurate formal and informal communications of ideas in three dimensions.
- * Be adaptable to changing situations and environments.

* Foster internal cohesiveness.

The *Staff Officers' Field Manual* dated 1932 may prove to hold the answer. . . The responsibilities of the commander can be divided into four principle functional groups. . . . "these four subdivisions, together with a coordinating head exist in the staffs of all units."

But things were different in those days and today's battlefield is more complex than it was in the past. This is precisely why the commander has a command sergeant major. In a time where the commander cannot see, be seen, and make his presence felt throughout the entire battlefield, he needs assistance. The command sergeant major can more than adequately fill the void created by the complex, expanding battlefield.

Stability and continuity is important in any team building activity. The fact that there appears to be one set of rules for garrison and another for the field is counterproductive. Trilateral staffs and unbalanced orientations are very unstable organizations. This is especially true of high stress and continuous operations common to the modern battlefield.

The only solution to the problem is to build a balanced team capable of functioning at the same level of performance in peace and war. The only way to get there is to close the gap between garrison and tactical staff procedures. The army must make our doctrine drive the situation rather than having it react to the situation.

Getting back to the main question that I posed back in the first section, the system is supposed to work to free the

commander and most efficiently use the leadership resources that are available to the battalion/task force. The techniques used today are varied in their structure and effectiveness. It is not that the doctrine is broken, but rather that the implementation is off the mark.

The bottom line is that we should return to the basics. Let's not be confused by the terms *fighting XO*, *2IC*, or *NCO support channel*. The descriptions of duties as set forth in the 1932 *Staff Officers' Field Manual*, and the 1944 version of FM 17-33 are more than adequate for today's battalion/task forces. Combine those words with the *balanced orientation* staff model that I described in the previous section. This system will work in both garrison and the field. The solution ultimately lies in making each leader and staff officer responsible for a prescribed set of duties and then holding him accountable for their performance in both peace and war.

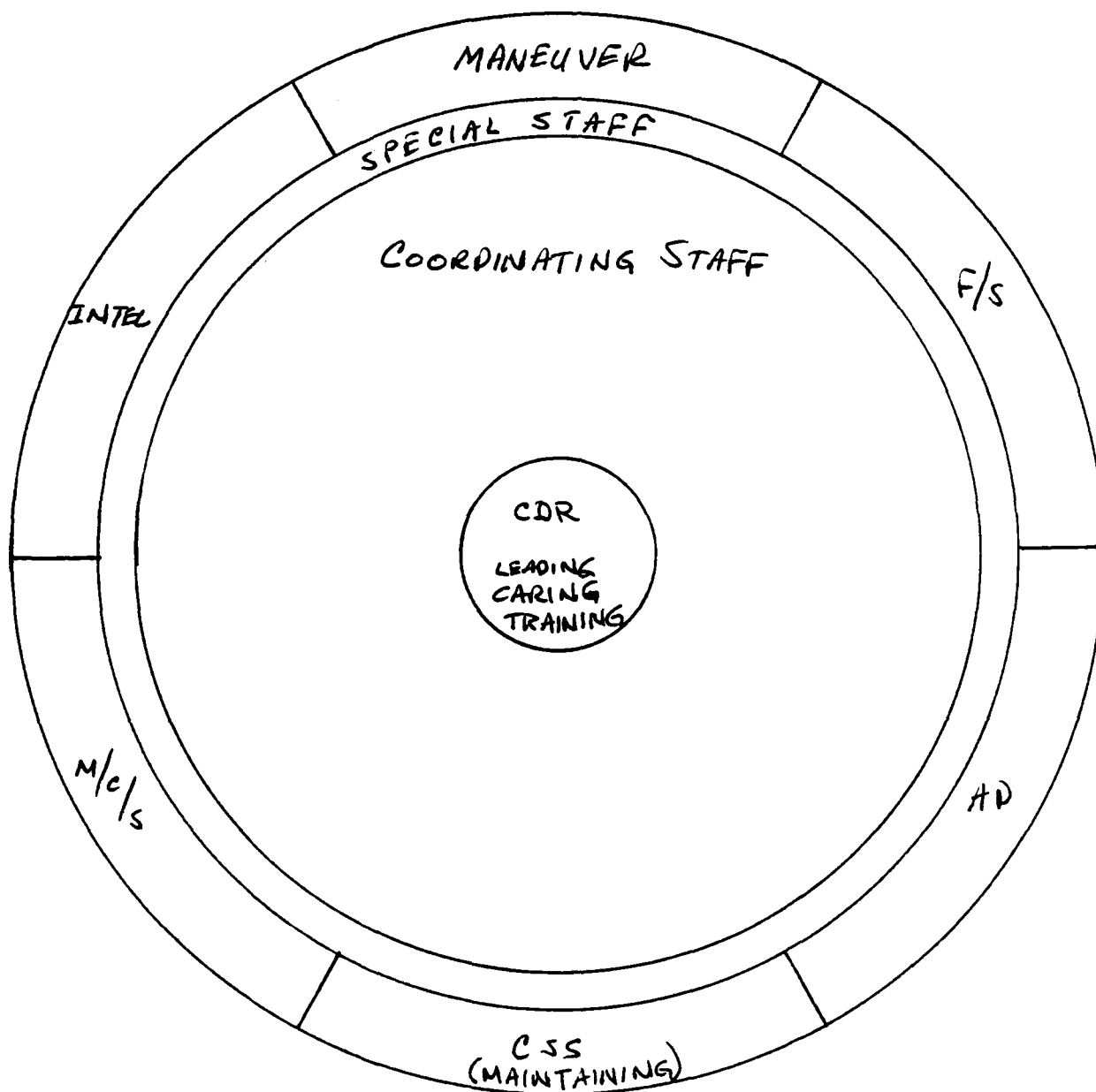


FIGURE 1
Basic Tactical Model

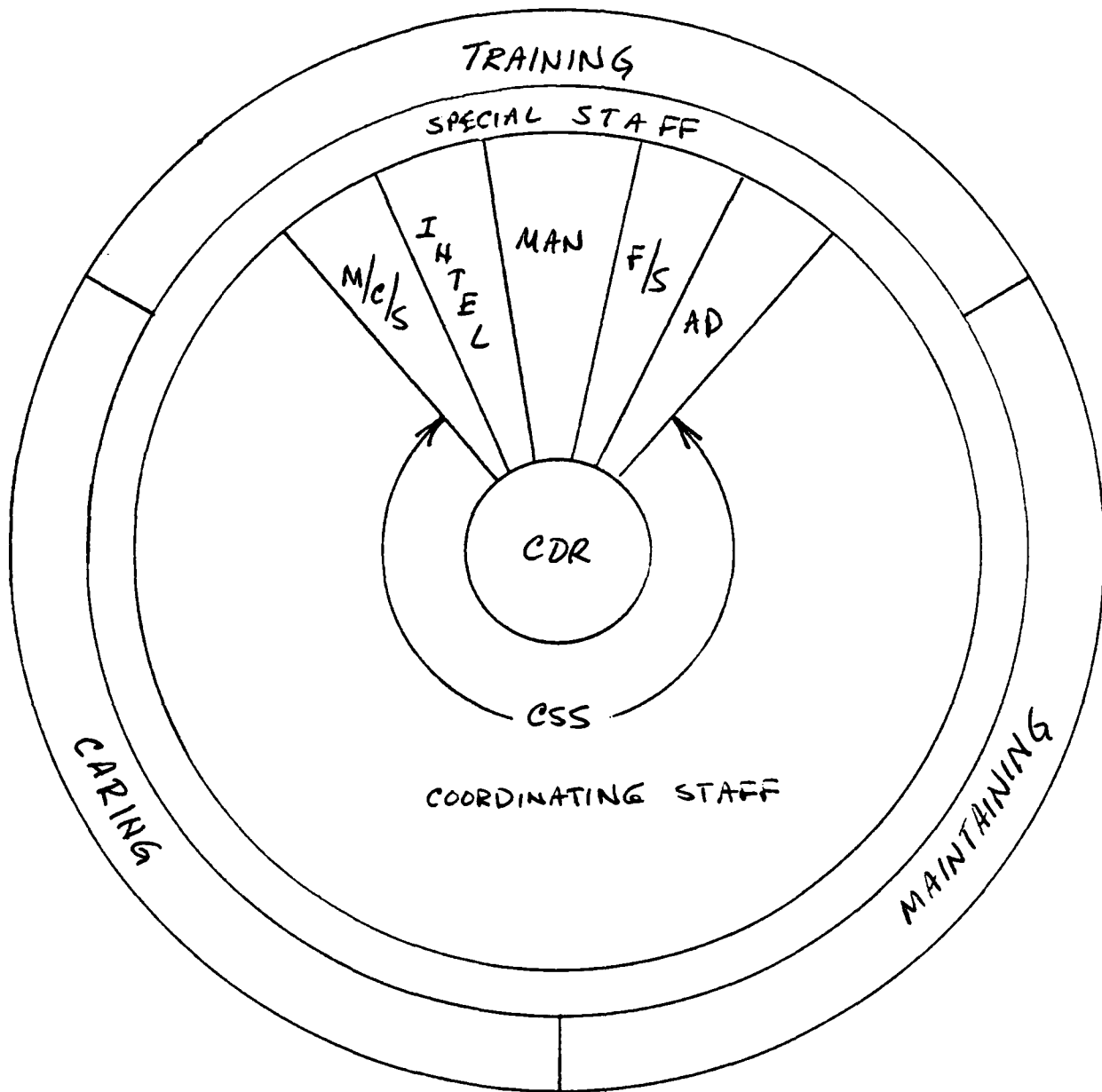


FIGURE 2
Basic Garrison Model

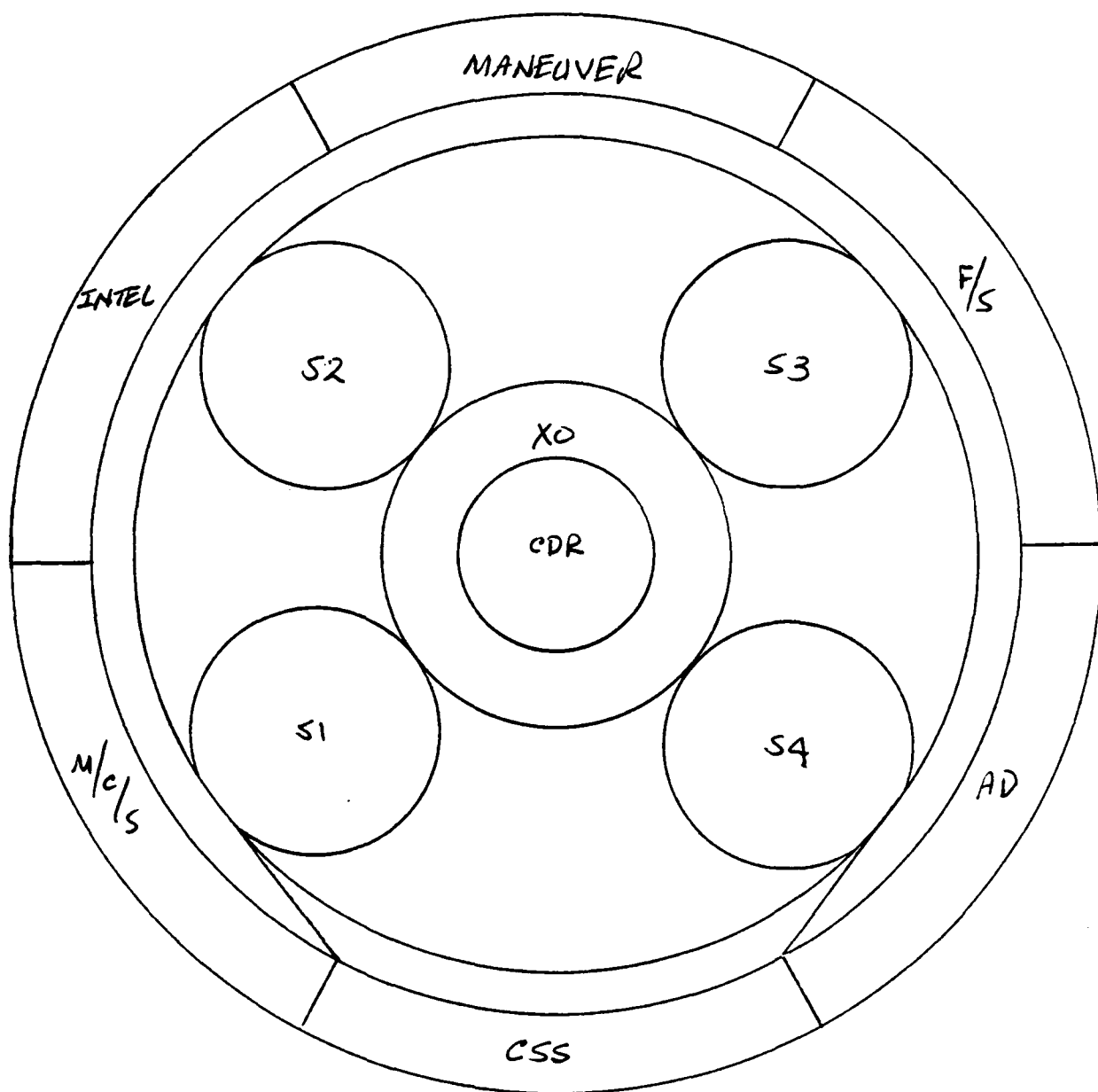


FIGURE 3
Tactical Model---1932

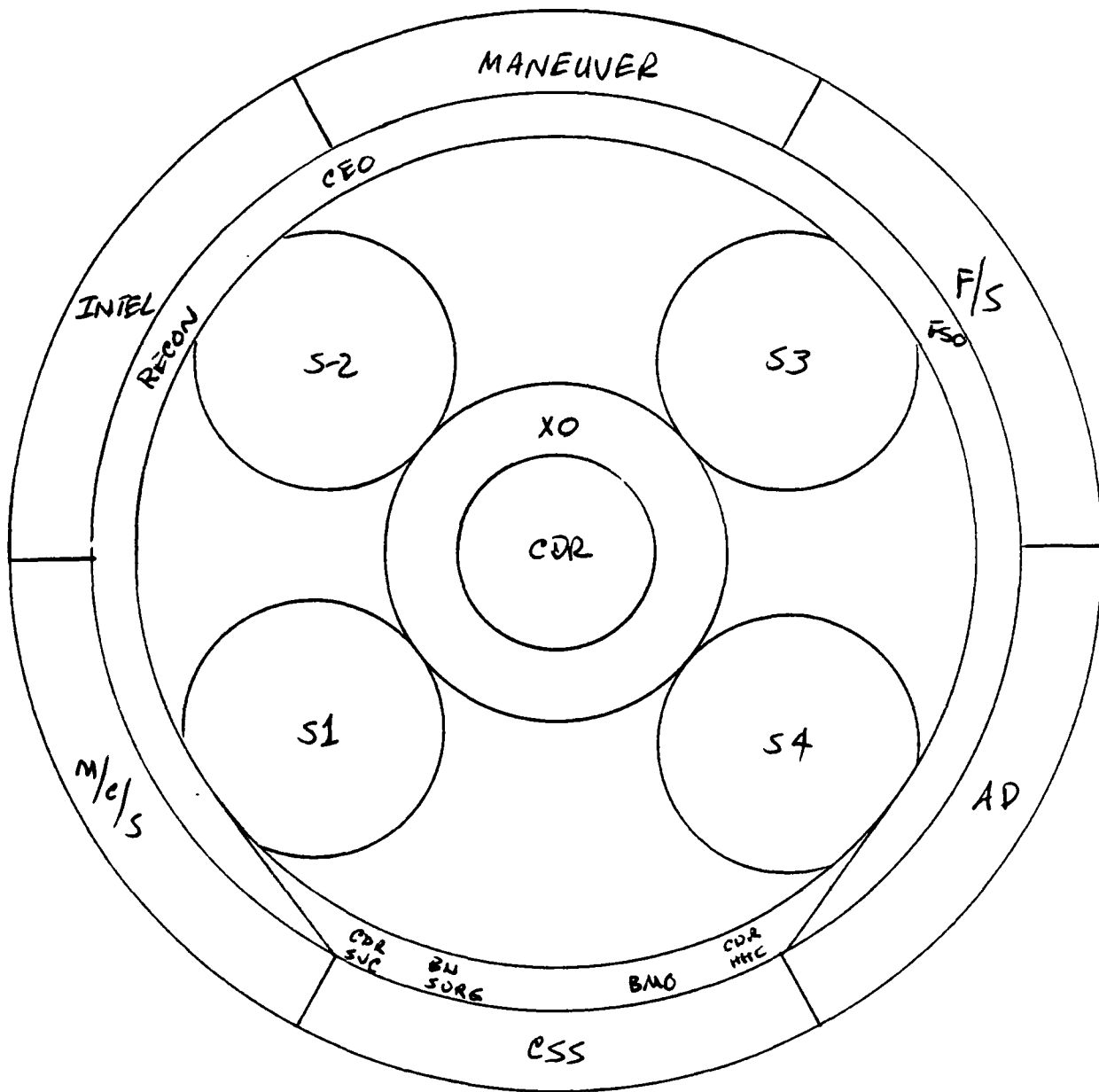


FIGURE 4

Tactical Model—Tank Battalion 1944

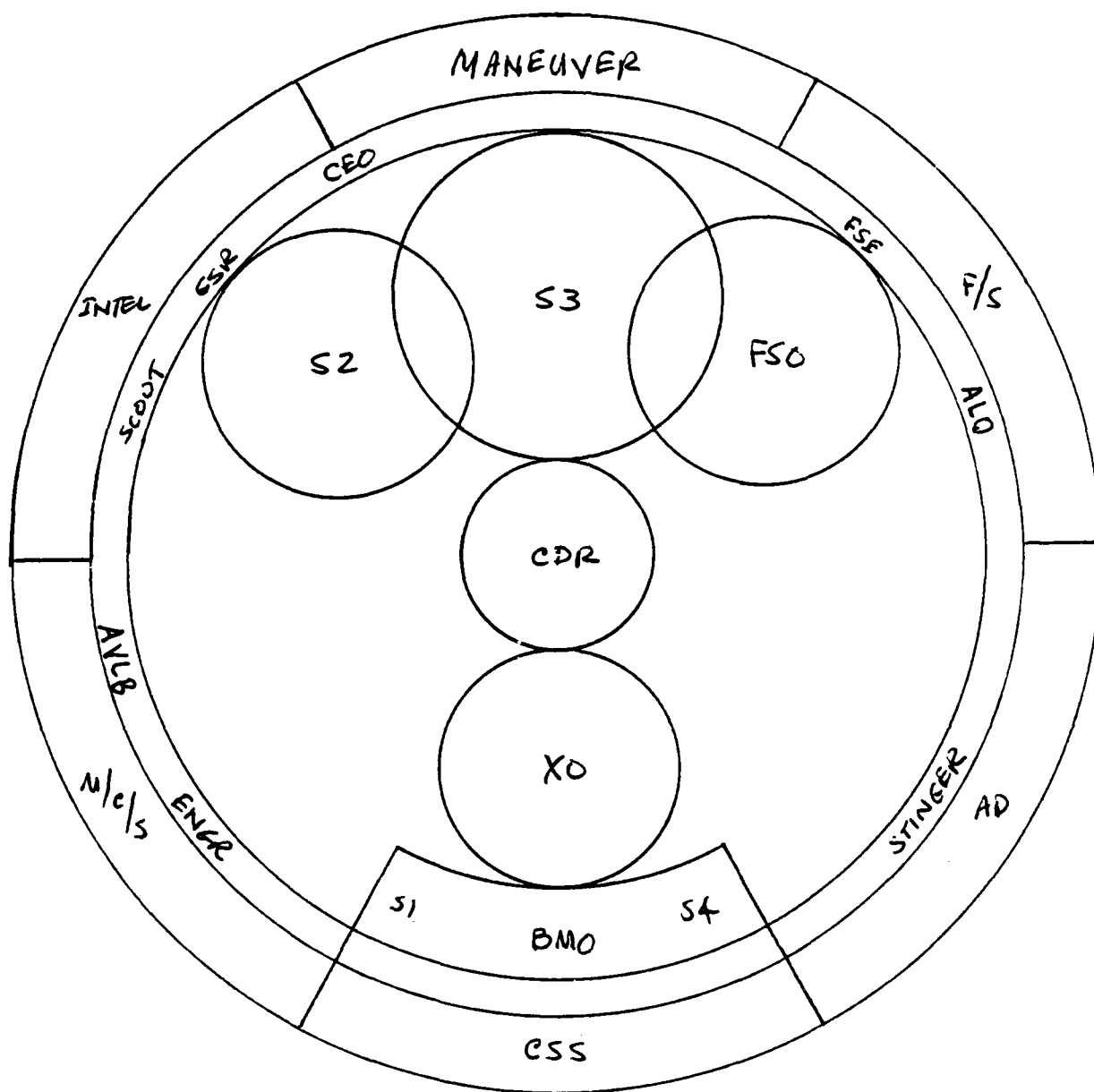


FIGURE 5
Tactical Model—1977 "How to Fight"

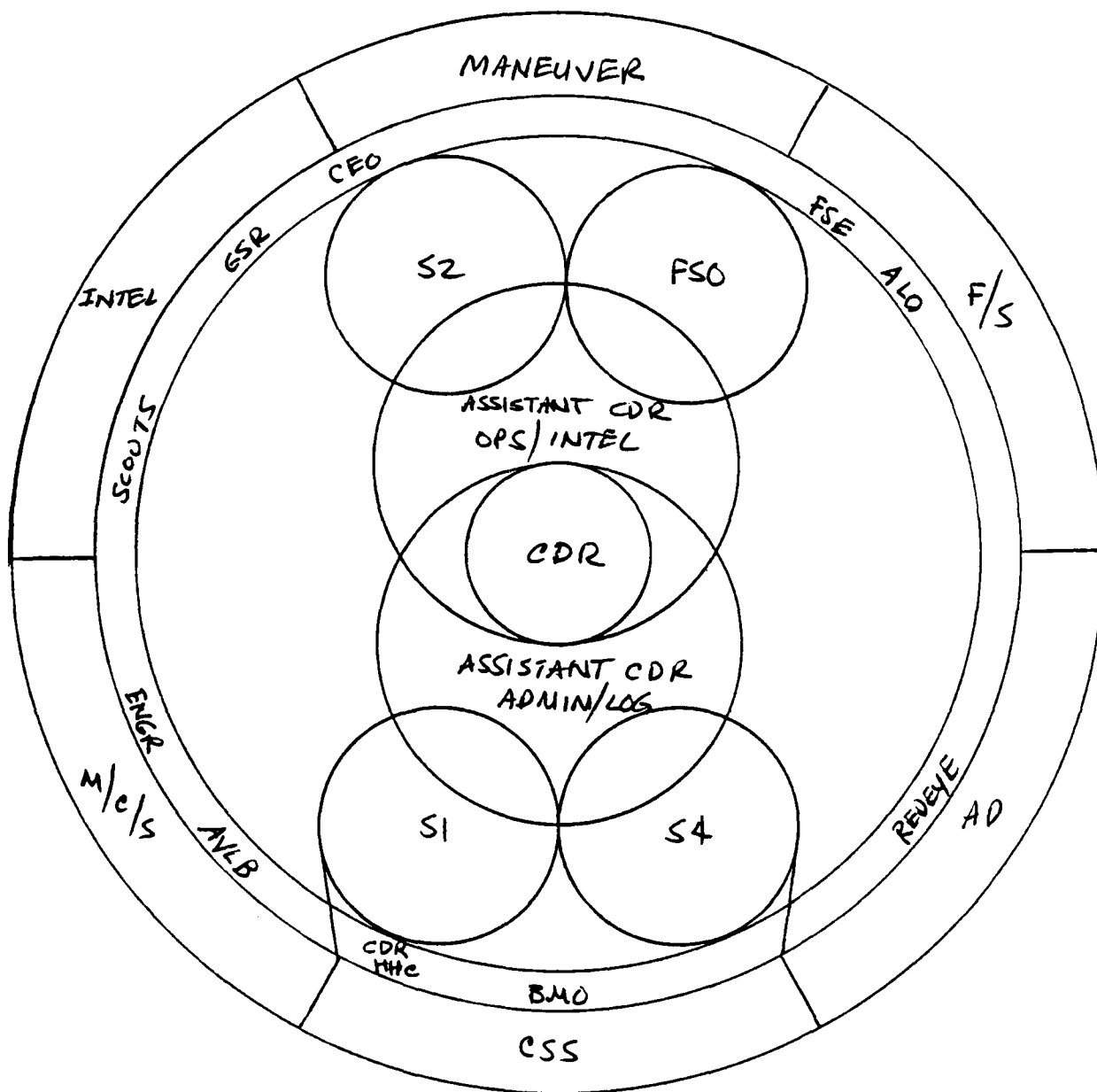


FIGURE 6

Tactical Model—Bilateral Staff

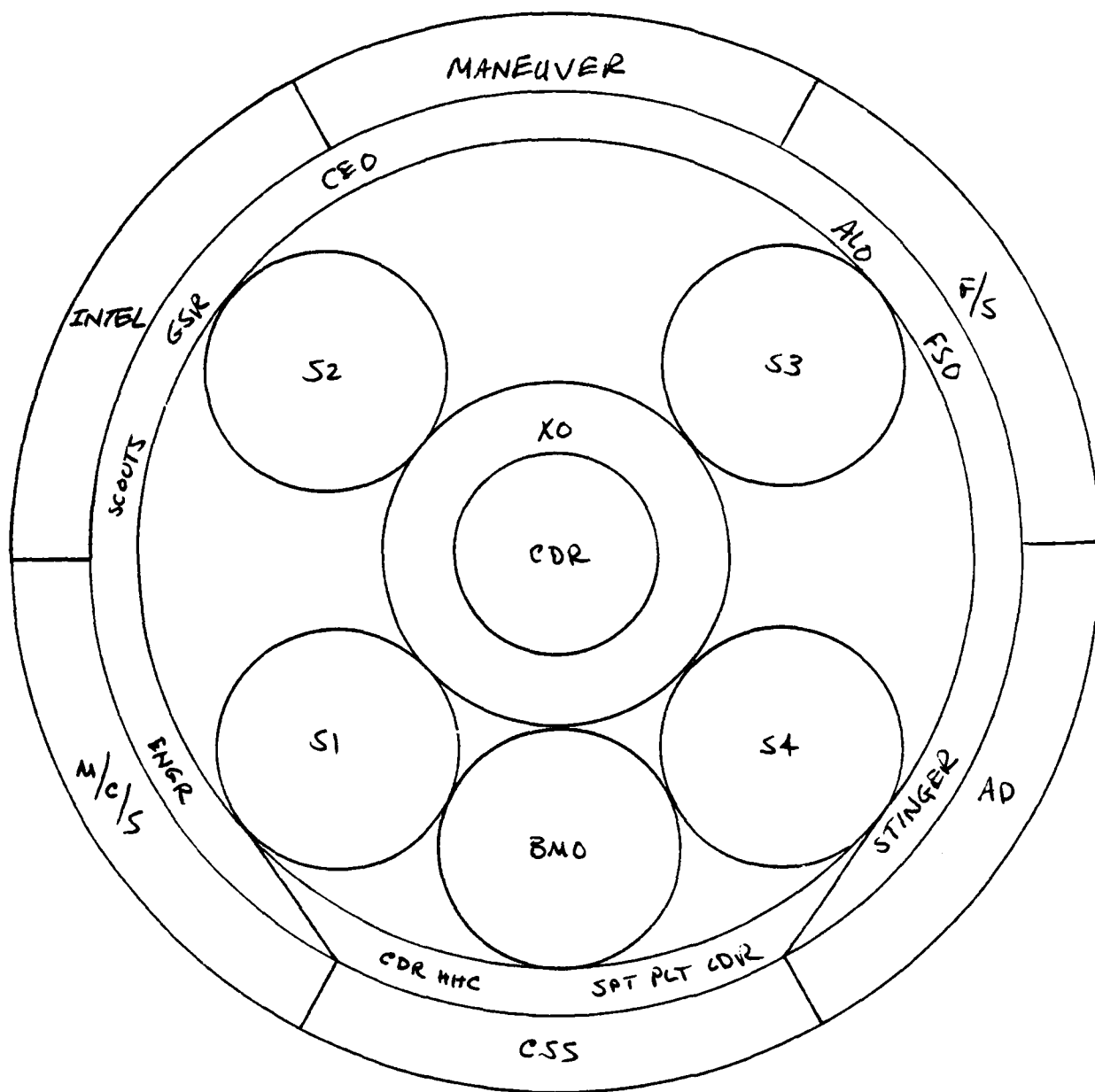


FIGURE 7
Tactical Model—1988

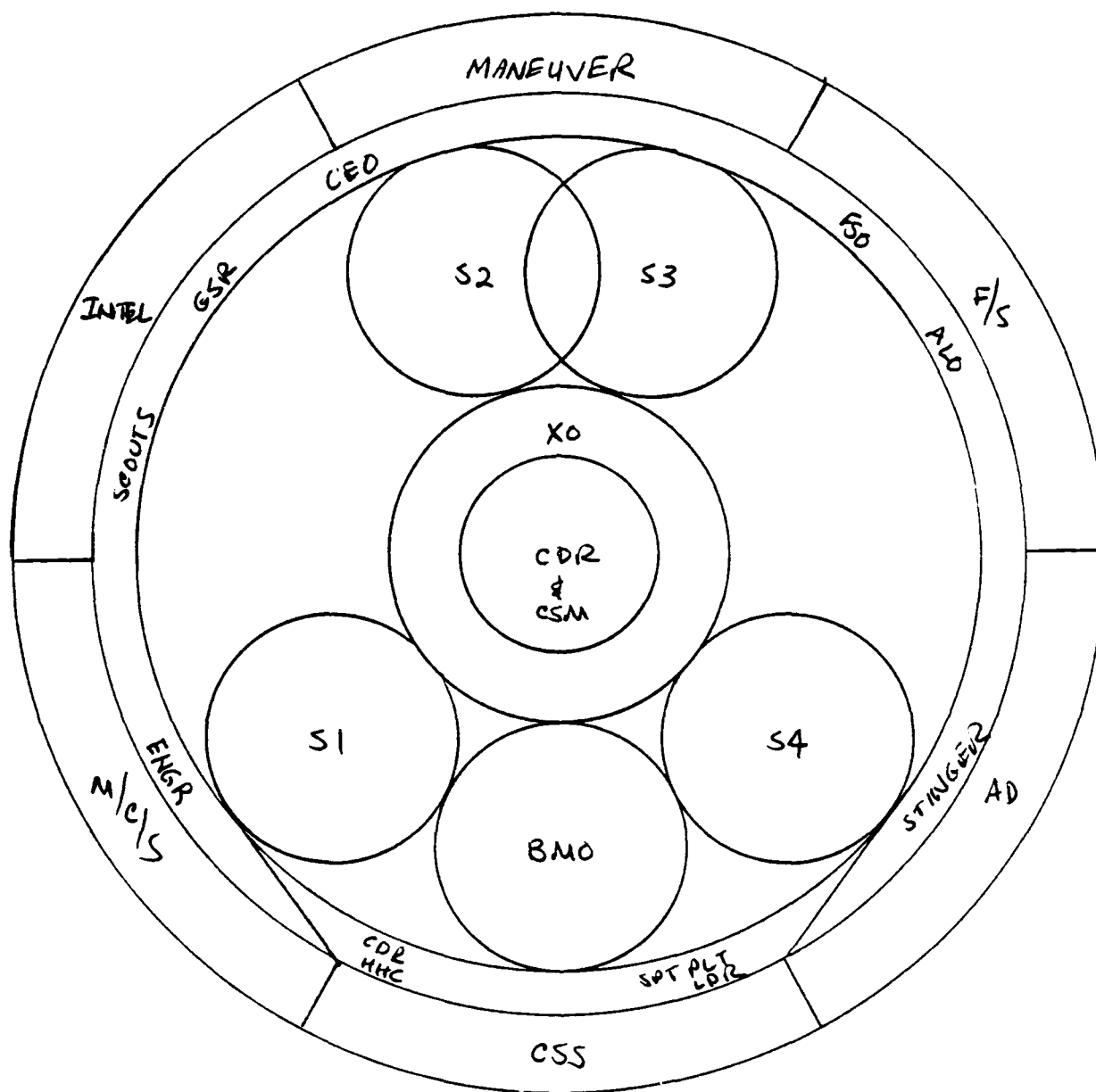


FIGURE 8

Tactical Model—Balanced Orientation

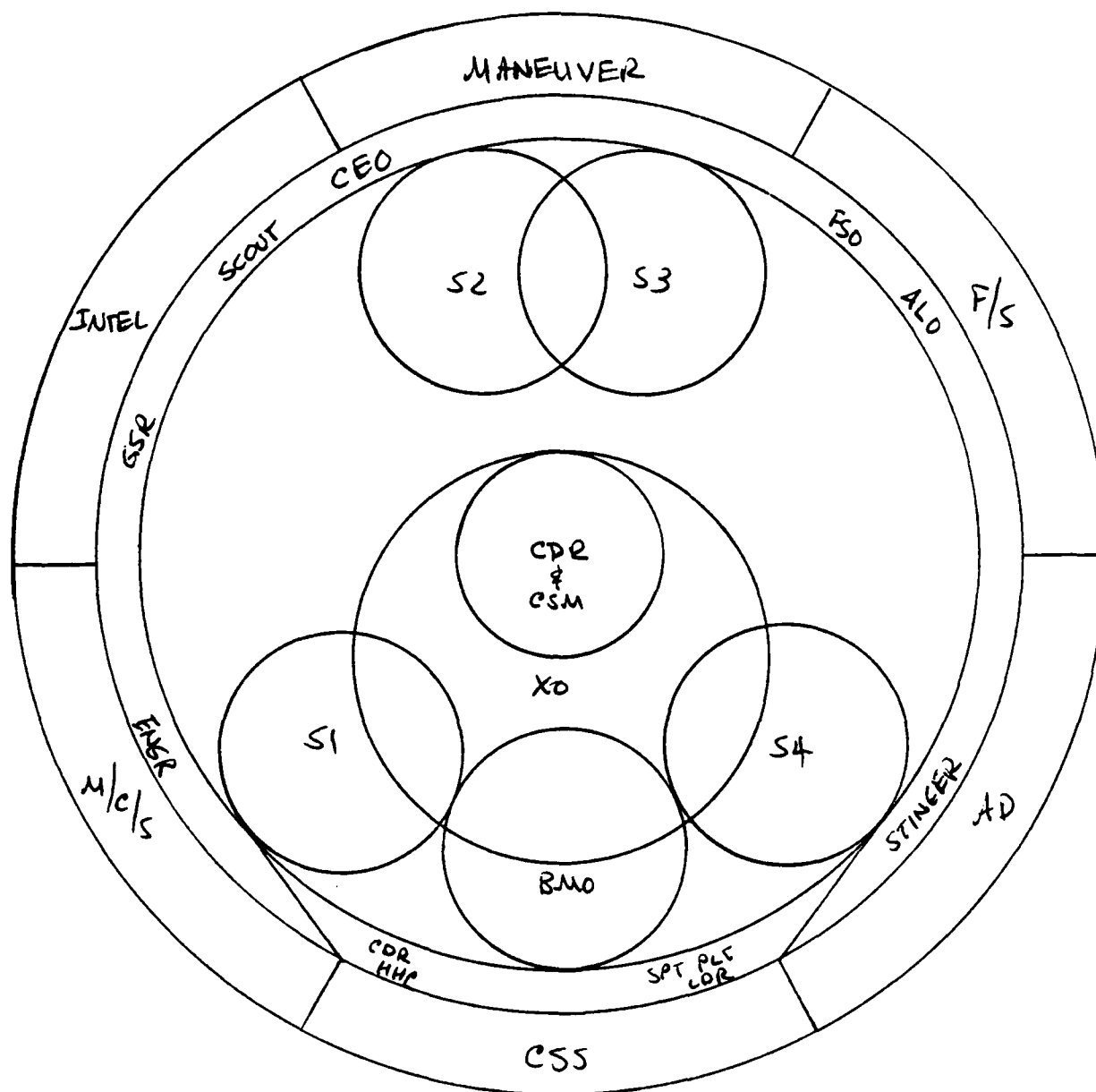


FIGURE 9

Tactical Model—Admin/Log Orientation

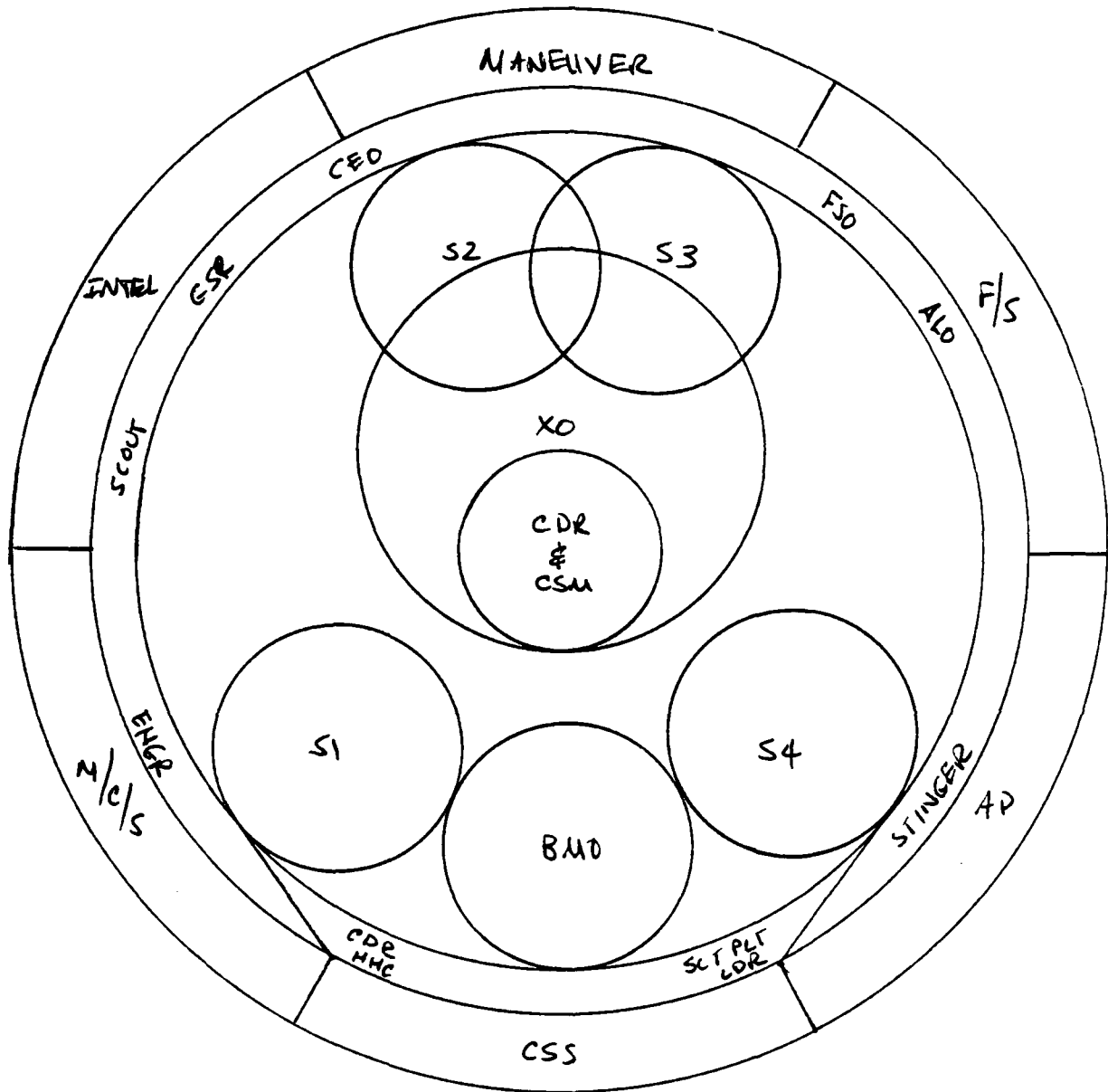


FIGURE 10

Tactical Model—Ops/Intel Orientation

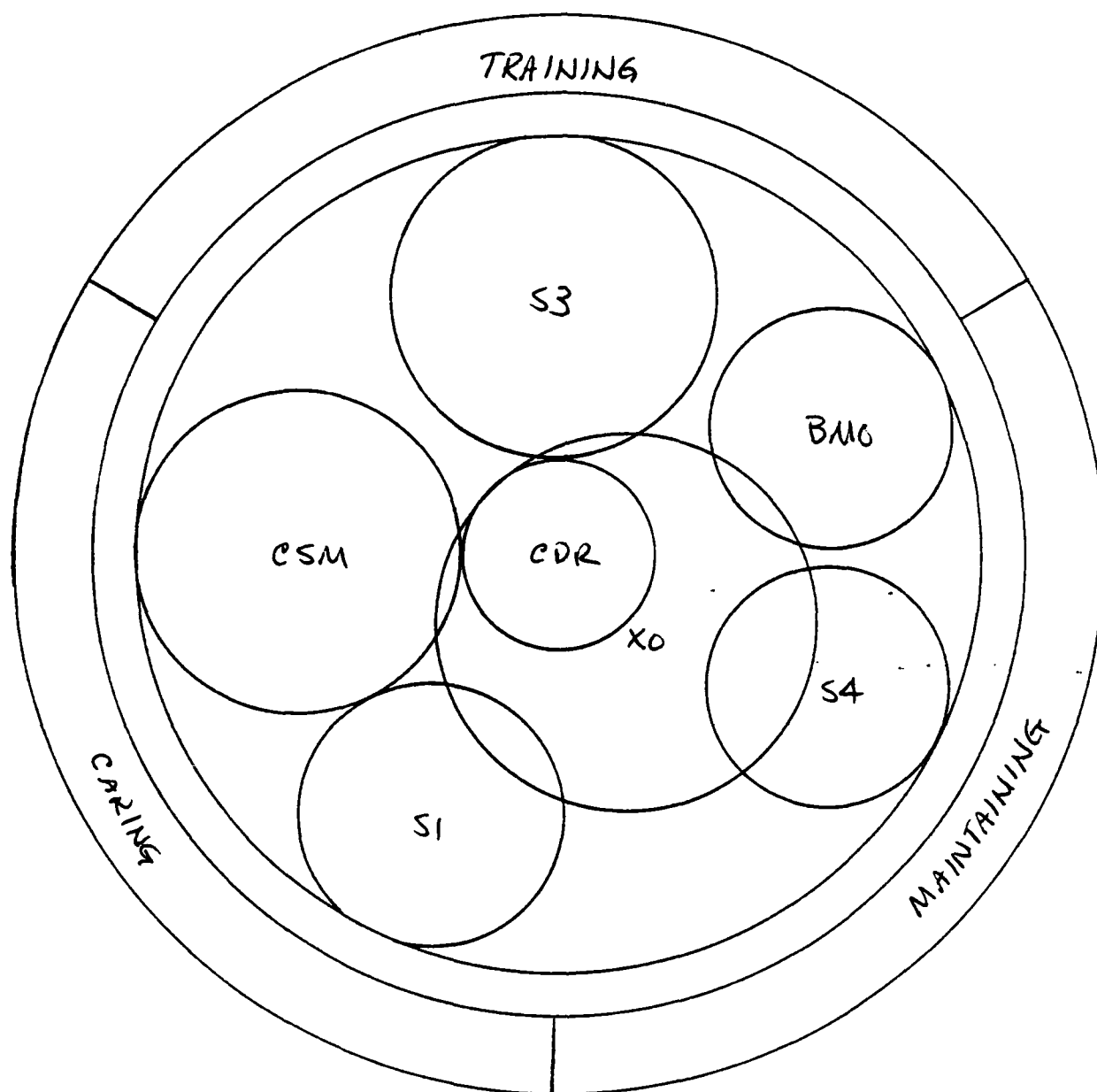


FIGURE 11

Garrison Model—Admin/Log Orientation

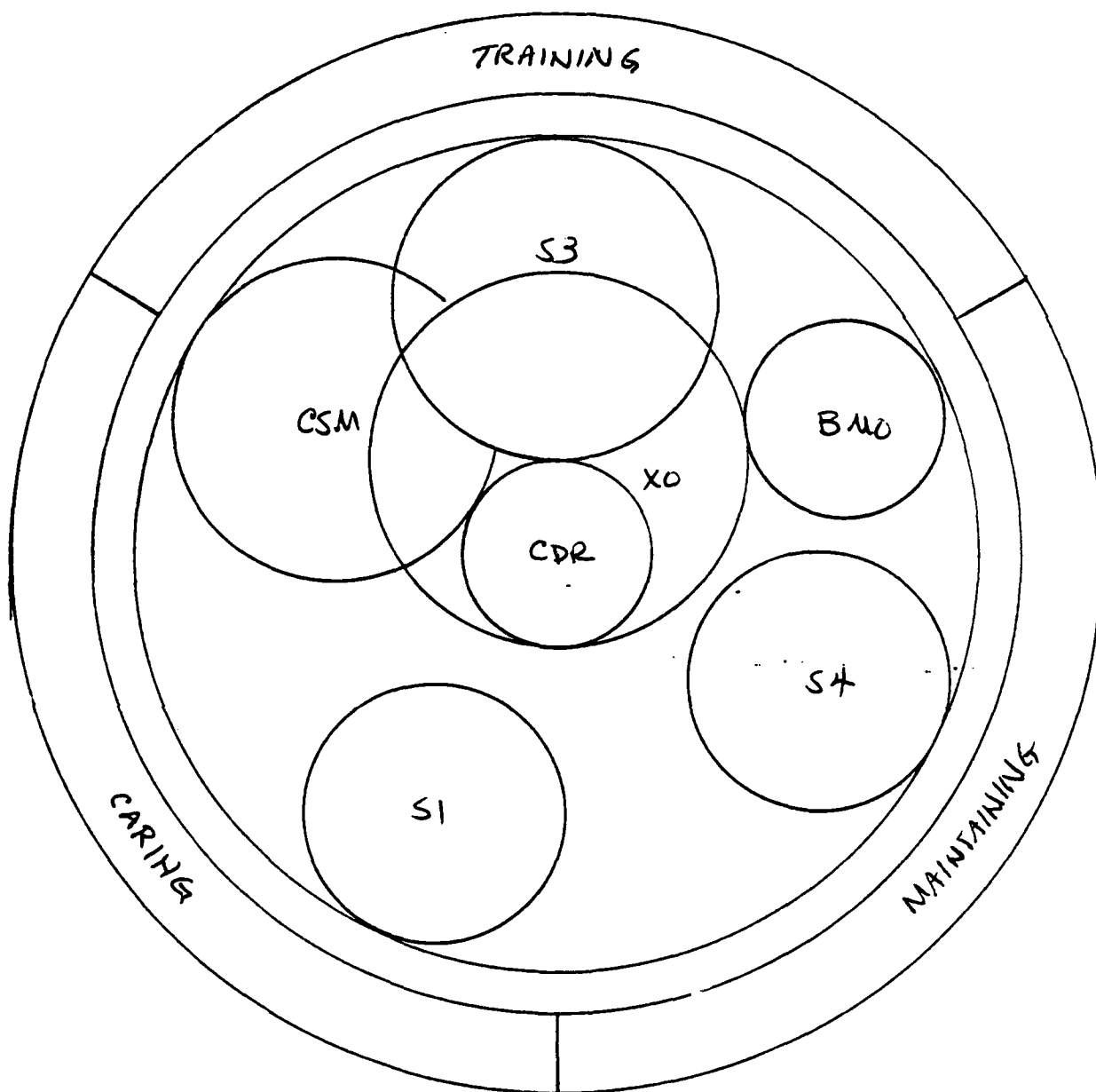


FIGURE 12
Garrison Model--Training Orientation

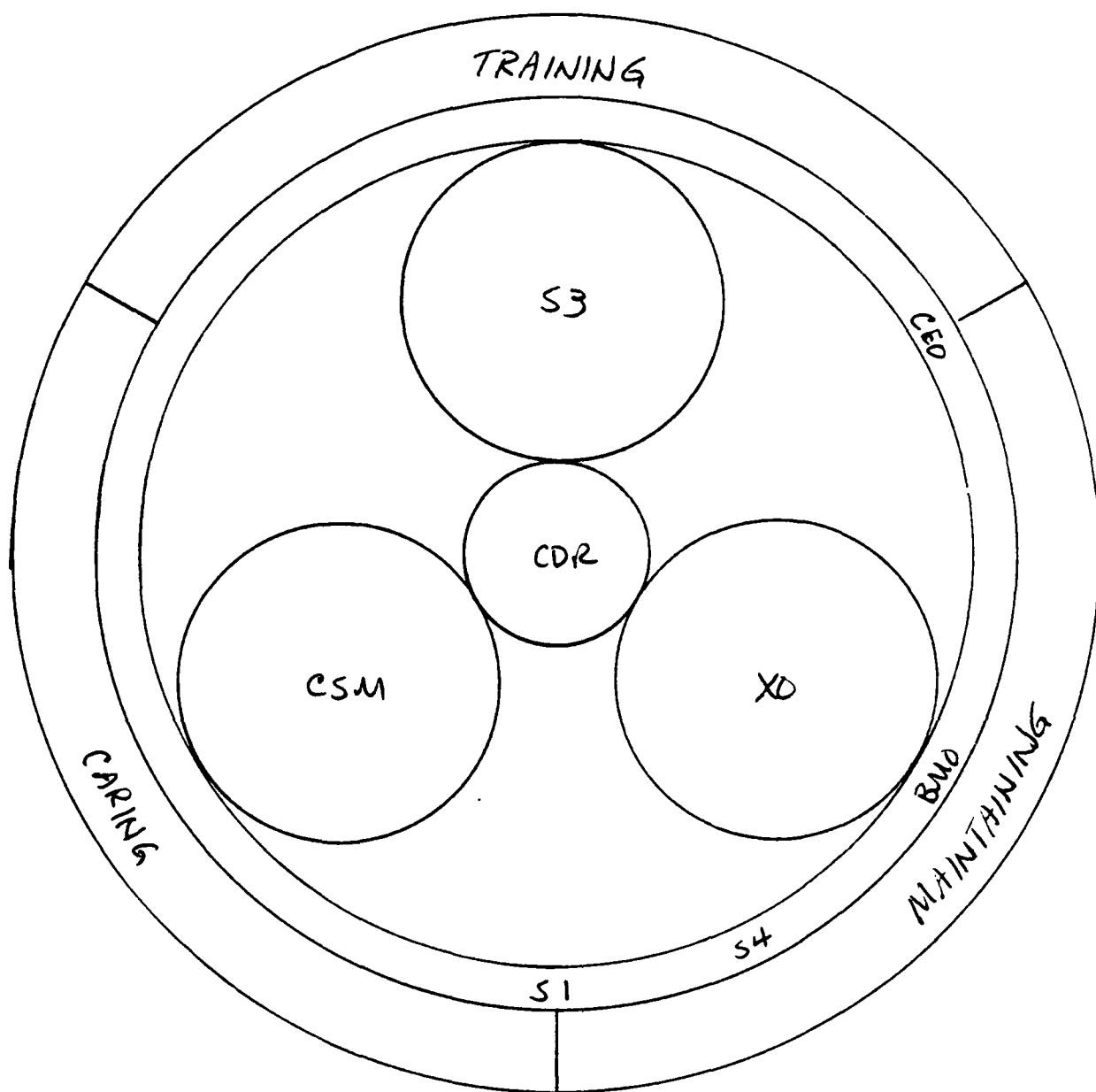


FIGURE 13

Garrison Model—Trilateral Organization

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